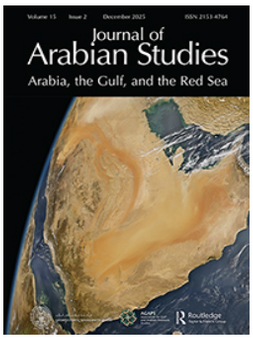

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Consulting Culture: Creating Arabian Peninsula Museums

ELIZABETH DERDERIAN

Abstract: While the Peninsula is sometimes painted as a cultural *tabula rasa* with no history of museums, the creation of blockbuster museums such as the Louvre and Guggenheim museums in Abu Dhabi and the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha are not without precedent. In fact, the mode of building museum projects on the Arabian Peninsula by relying on external consultants has nearly a century-long history. This article charts the origins of museum practice in Arabian Peninsula museums by focusing on three periods: the colonial (1930s), mid-twentieth century nationalization (1960s–70s), and the contemporary (post-2000). By showing the continuities of practice across these moments, I consider when the category of "Arabian Peninsula" is salient, and connect the widely mediated museum developments in the contemporary Gulf to a longer, Peninsula-wide history of practice. Building on scholarship attending to the complex histories of labor and migration to the region and analyses of museum practice today, this article charts the history of cultural and museum consultants across the region to contextualize current developments.

Keywords: museum, Gulf, Kuwait, Aden, UAE, consultant

1 Introduction

On a Sunday in October 1935, British archaeologist Harold Hargreaves made his way, "with some difficulty", to the Aden Museum in the Aden Protectorate, then part of British India and now Yemen.[1] Hargreaves aimed to visit the port's small new museum in the Crater neighborhood for his work with the nonprofit group Museums Association (UK), for which he was surveying all museums in India. Finding the museum was not easy but when he eventually arrived at 7:30 am, Hargreaves met its young curator, Abdur Rahman. Hargreaves seemed unimpressed: "[Abdur Rahman] has had no museum experience and has never seen any other museum".[2]

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Readers will note spelling and capitalization inconsistencies between quoted material, following British spelling and capitalization practices, and the article's main text. To preserve the integrity of the sources, I have not altered the original spellings and capitalizations.

[1] Hargreaves (Museums Association), "Aden Museum", reprinted in Markham (Empire Secretary, Museums Association) to Ormsby-Gore (Secretary of State for the Colonies), 15 July 1936, File 98/1, IOR/R20/B/899, British Library (hereafter BL), London.

[2] Ibid.

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Hargreaves' annoyance emerged in his subsequent report on the museum: "it was difficult to obtain information from him touching museum exhibitions and administration".[3] Indeed, he wrote, "the Curator knew nothing of the history of the museum" prior to 1930–31.[4]

He did note the museum was "neat and clean", housed in a relatively new building which opened 23 February 1931.[5] Hargreaves detailed much of the museum's then-collection and display, including a praised butterfly exhibit accompanied by a "useful chart", a mongoose entwined with a snake, jewelry, weapons, and some poorly-taxidermied dugongs "with open joints displaying the stuffing".[6] Overall Hargreaves found the "labelling not satisfactory" and remarked rather drily, "the body of a large dead spider did not appear to be one of the exhibits".[7] Painting a picture of a sparsely attended, disorganized hodge-podge of curiosities, Hargreaves concluded, "Naturally there can be no educational activities in a museum where the curator knows little about even a few of the exhibits and nothing at all about the majority".[8] So reads the first report on the first museum on the Arabian Peninsula.

Contemporary museum projects in the Gulf are often sensationalized as novel and the Arabian Peninsula presented as a cultural *tabula rasa* with no history of museums, but the creation of blockbuster museums such as the Louvre and Guggenheim museums in Abu Dhabi and the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha are not without precedent. In fact, the mode of building museum projects on the Peninsula by relying on external consultants has nearly a century long history. This article charts three periods of interventions: the colonial (1930s), the nationalization era (1960s–70s), and the contemporary (post-2000). Showing the continuities of practice between these moments connects the widely mediated museum developments across the contemporary Gulf states to a longer, Peninsula-wide history of practice.[9] While "Arabian Peninsula museum practice" was a legible category throughout much of the 20th century, the current meaningful category is "Gulf museum practice". I do not claim museum practice across the Peninsula is or was homogenous, but rather draw out similarities where they exist.

sHargreaves' encounter with the Aden Museum forecasts nearly a century of similar interventions, of Anglophone 'expert' consultants dropping in and later submitting critical reports on the Arabian Peninsula's museums. I use the term "experts" warily, following Neha Vora's critique of the conflation of expatriate (expat) and expertise, and substantial scholarship attending to racialized hierarchies forged and maintained through claims of expertise,[10] especially

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid. These are likely the Adeni "mermaids", referred to in other sources and depicted in Bel, *Aden: Port Mythique au Yémen* (1998), p. 89.
[7] Hargreaves (Museums Association), "Aden Museum", reprinted in Markham (Empire Secretary, Museums Association) to Ormsby-Gore (Secretary of State for the Colonies), 15 July 1936, File 98/1, IOR/R20/B/899, BL, London.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Carapico, "Arabia Incognita: An Invitation to Arabian Peninsula Studies", in Vitalis and Al-Rasheed (eds), *Counter-Narratives: History, Contemporary Society, and Politics in Saudi Arabia and Yemen* (2004), pp. 11–33. Other scholars have also interrogated the utility of geographical groupings: Green, "Rethinking the 'Middle East' after the Oceanic Turn", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34.3 (2014), pp. 556–564; Keshavarzian, *Making Space for the Gulf: Histories of Regionalism and the Middle East* (2024); Low, "The Indian Ocean and Other Middle East", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34.3 (2014), pp. 549–555; Onley and Nonneman, "The *Journal of Arabian Studies* and the Development of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies", *Journal of Arabian Studies* 10.1 (2020), pp. 1–50.
[10] Vora, "Expat/Expert Camps: Redefining 'Labour' within Gulf Migration", in Khalaf, AlShehabi, and Hanieh (eds), *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf* (2015), pp. 170–197; Also see:

the "museological modality", per Bernard Cohn, as a colonial form of knowledge-making.[11] The term consultants is not as laden as the term experts, although many consultants reiterated colonial and Eurocentric practices and expertise in their recommendations. It also captures the short-term nature of these interventions and a connotation of corporatization and neoliberalization.

Building on scholarship attending to the complex histories of labor and migration to the region, in particular challenging racialized oversimplifications of expat and migrant,[12] and analyses of museum practice today,[13] this article outlines the history of cultural and museum consultants across the region to contextualize current developments. In addition to emphasizing technical issues of display, museum consultants across the three periods have consistently imported Euro-American practices for museum staff, often focusing on education, accessibility, and technical issues of display.

These periods of interventions correspond to significant political economic shifts. British colonial administrators in Aden undertook the first wave of museum interventions in the 1930s. During the period of nationalization in the 1960s–70s, transnational nonprofit consultants — mainly UNESCO — enacted similar interventions across many countries on the Peninsula. After the rise of oil, OPEC, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and Gulf War (1990–91), a third wave of museological interventions transpired mainly in the GCC countries, often perpetuated by private commercial consultants such as Barker Langham or Lord Cultural Consulting. The practices developed during the British colonization in Aden informed and established patterns for subsequent interventions by UNESCO consultants forty years later, which in turn shaped early 21st century museum development projects. Given 20th century political developments between GCC states and Yemen, analyzing shared practices between these states seems improbable. Yet the cultural consulting model in today's GCC states stems from that longer, Peninsula-wide history.

Drawing on interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, and archival documentation, I trace how these waves of consultants scaffolded the social role of the museum and display practices

Le Renard, *Western Privilege: Work, Intimacy and Postcolonial Hierarchies in Dubai* (2021); Mickel, *Why Those Who Shovel Are Silent* (2021); Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (2002).

[11] Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (1996). For more on museums as disciplining agents, see: Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1996); Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (1995); Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (1995); McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre* (1994); Pieprzak, *Imagined Museums: Art and Modernity in Postcolonial Morocco* (2010).

[12] On expatriatism, see: Fechter and Walsh, "Examining 'Expatriate' Continuities: Postcolonial Approaches to Mobile Professionals", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36.8 (2010), pp. 1197–1210; Hindman, *Mediating the Global: Expatria's Forms and Consequences in Kathmandu* (2013); On migration in GCC states, see: Kanna, *Dubai: The City as Corporation* (2011); Kanna, Le Renard, and Vora, *Beyond Exception: New Interpretations of the Arabian Peninsula* (2020); Le Renard, *Western Privilege*; Schielke, *Migrant Dreams: Egyptian Workers in the Gulf States* (2020); Wright, *Between Dreams and Ghosts: Indian Migration and Middle Eastern Oil* (2021); Vora, *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (2013); Vora, *Teach for Arabia: American Universities, Liberalism, and Transnational Qatar* (2019); Walsh, "Emotion and Migration: British Transnationals in Dubai", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30.1 (2012), pp. 43–59.

[13] Erskine-Loftus (ed.), *Reimagining Museums: Practice in the Arabian Peninsula* (2014); Exell and Rico (eds), *Cultural Heritage in the Arabian Peninsula: Debates, Discourses and Practices* (2014); Exell and Wakefield (eds), *Museums in Arabia: Transnational Practices and Regional Processes* (2016); Sindelar, "Local, Regional, Global: An Investigation of Art Dubai's Transnational Strategies", *Arabian Humanities* 7 (2016); Wakefield, *Cultural Heritage, Transnational Narratives and Museum Franchising in Abu Dhabi* (2020).

with minimal input from, and sometimes derision towards, local communities.[14] Consultants asserted a Euro-American expertise by citing technical issues of display, including issues of so-termed appropriate labelling and didactic text; security and preservation; and lighting. Such recommendations are part of the "objects of knowledge that become the insignia of a profession's craft: the theories, artifacts and bodies of expertise that distinguish it from other professions", a way of claiming expertise.[15] Heritage "experts act as burnishers, brokers and beneficiaries of World Heritage prestige", and "lend lustre to site inscriptions, providing the intellectual infrastructure for processes that classify and enable distinction".[16] Similarly, museum consultants on the Arabian Peninsula promote, mediate and capitalize on museum projects there; these projects merit interrogation because of the precedents and standards they set.

The creation of expertise and knowledge is not neutral: power structures and political entities shape knowledge production, particularly in the modes of classifying, so-called universal histories and chronologies,[17] the logics of display,[18] or the ways that logics of the era structure what can or cannot be known.[19] In particular, the production of power in colonial and postcolonial contexts is integral to the processes and knowledge practices of modernity.[20]

Given the gaps between these waves, the subsequent group of consultants usually arrived with little awareness of any prior interventions, resulting in misleading and inaccurate claims of being the first to undertake something. The sustained reliance on short-term, foreign consultants has, in the cultural sector, enabled easy erasures of prior labor and claims of *tabula rasa*. These interventions of the 1930s reinscribe colonial policies and establish the patterns followed by subsequent waves of consultants: a focus on education, curated displays, and pedigreed staff.

2 Aden's colonial consultants

The first wave of museum consultants making museums on the Arabian Peninsula were British colonial officials stationed there. To suppress alleged piracy in the region and protect imperial trade and travel to India, the British Crown signed trucial agreements with Gulf shaykhs beginning in the early 1800s.[21] British troops occupied Aden (present-day Yemen, then part of British India) and some of its surrounds between 1839–1967, thus maintaining a foothold on the northern and southern rims of the Peninsula.

In 1923, the Aden Historical Society formed "to collect and preserve for Aden the relics of Arabia Felix which had hitherto found their way to European and American museums".[22] The British oversaw the creation of the museum to house those relics, which Hargreaves would

[14] This research was approved by and followed all rules stipulated by Northwestern University's IRB, the Fulbright, and the College of Wooster's HSRC committee.

[15] Goodwin, "Professional Vision", *American Anthropologist* 96.3 (1994), p. 606.

[16] James, *Experts in the World Heritage Regime: Between Protection and Prestige* (2024), p. 18.

[17] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edn (1999), p. 31; Also see: Landau, "Human Evolution as Narrative", *American Scientist* 72.3 (May–June 1984), pp. 262–268; Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (2004).

[18] Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (1995); Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936", *Social Text* 11 (1984–85), pp. 20–64; Moser, "The Devil Is in the Detail: Museum Displays and the Creation of Knowledge", *Museum Anthropology* 33.1 (2010), pp. 22–32.

[19] Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1994).

[20] Exell, *Modernity and the Museum in the Arabian Peninsula* (2016); Mitchell, *Rule of Experts.*

[21] Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers and the British in the Nineteenth Century Gulf* (2007).

[22] Markham and Hargreaves, *The Museums of India* (1936), p. 218.

later visit. According to the archives, the Aden museum was the first museum[23] to open on the Arabian Peninsula, part of a wider network of imperial museums intended both to discipline and educate their local communities and to establish Britain firmly as the arbiter of culture and civilization.[24]

Hargreaves' visit played an important role. The London-based Museums Association, founded in 1889, was an early professional association. It held conferences, published a journal, and provided intermittent reports on museums across British-controlled territories. Sydney Markham, the Empire Secretary of the association, sent a copy of Hargreaves' report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with a cover letter noting, "This Museum is frankly a disgrace and yet it is the only cultural centre in an area several times as large as the British Isles".[25] Sent while Aden was preparing to separate as a colony, Markham's letter launched a flurry of exchanges about improving the Aden museum.[26] This correspondence reveals much about officials' understandings of display standards, the use of short-term consultants, and the overall social role of museums as guardians of empire. Officials argued this work required trained professionals: as former British Museum director Frederic Kenyon wrote in 1939, there was "a need for a man who shall be the executive curator" of Aden's museum — and that perhaps the curator could also be the region's antiquities advisor.[27]

In his 1936 letter, Markham enjoined the Crown to encourage the future governor of Aden to put resources towards the museum. Markham and Hargreaves also published a brief entry on the Aden Museum in *The Museums of India*, describing it as "poorly-staffed, ill-equipped, neglected and of little educative value".[28] In the overall report, they encouraged dramatic reforms across British imperial museums, presaging later workforce nationalization strategies:

> a qualified expert in the general museum administration and practice should be introduced at once and … under him a [local] officer should be trained — a training that should be followed by an extensive course or courses at selected British and American institutions. At the end of three years the assistant should be able to take over charge and [the colony] would possess its own museum expert able to maintain a high standard of efficiency and to train others.[29]

Training to build pedigrees for staff reappears throughout this history. To support the development of properly qualified local staff for these institutions, Markham and Hargreaves also

[23] By museum, I mean an institution that is called such (either in English or in Arabic as *maṭḥaf)* and one that is open to the public. MacLean makes a compelling argument for *majlis* rooms (living rooms or sitting rooms) in Emirati homes as an alternative mode of museums and display, see: MacLean, "Time, Space and Narrative in Emirati Museums", in Hightower, Erskine-Loftus, and Al-Mulla (eds), *Representing the Nation: Heritage, Museums, National Narratives and Identity in the Gulf States* (2016), pp. 191–203. Here I focus on non-residential displays that are open to most publics, not private collections or residential displays.

[24] See: McAleer and Longair (eds), *Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience* (2014); McAleer and Mackenzie (eds), *Exhibiting the Empire: Cultures of Display and the British Empire* (2015).

[25] Markham (Empire Secretary, Museums Association) to Ormsby-Gore (Secretary of State for the Colonies), 15 July 1936, File 98/1, IOR/R20/B/899, BL, London.

[26] Robbins, "The Legal Status of Aden Colony and the Aden Protectorate", *The American Journal of International Law* 33.4 (1939), p. 702.

[27] Kenyon (Archaeological Joint Committee) to Ormsby-Gore (Secretary of State for the Colonies), 27 May 1939, CO 725/63/17, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), London.

[28] Markham and Hargreaves, *The Museums of India* (1936), p. 25.

[29] Ibid., p. 91. The original text notes "India" in these lines, referring to all of British India, which then included Aden. I replaced "India" with its connotative location for clarity.

recommended the creation of scholarships for "competent and qualified curatorial aspirants", as scholarships "to suitable persons" would stimulate the growing cadre of local expertise.[30] This strategy appears in both later waves of consultants.

The role of the museum as an educational tool also emerged early. Markham and Hargreaves also decried the "marked failure to use museums as educational institutions".[31] They stressed the need for "strengthening in every way … the connection between museums and education".[32] One way to accomplish these connections was to create labels and guidebooks: in their summary of desired improvements, they recommended that "the collections are catalogued and the exhibits carefully preserved and labeled, and that handbooks, catalogs and guides to the collections are prepared by the curator or other qualified persons".[33]

Educational value could be achieved through specificity and coherence. The two men appended a sharp list for curators, encouraging them to

> decide what is to be the scope and purpose of your museum … keep rigidly to your plan and ask yourself apropos of each object: what will the visitor learn from this and the label I give it? Exhibit nothing without an intelligent label.[34]

Here they explicitly tie the creation of labels to the museum's educational role. Labels were to be expressly didactic or locational. They admonished, "where possible, supplement specimens and labels by explanatory photographs or pictures".[35] Labels also helped visitors to navigate:

> in all large museums and galleries clear plans should be placed conspicuously in the entrance hall and at all central and pivotal points indicating quite clearly where the visitor is standing and how he is to find his way to other parts of the building.[36]

They also argued against overcrowding in displays, and recommended removing redundant specimens from display, a recommendation common for this time.[37] The remaining displays should be secured "under glass" and in "air-tight cases" with "adequate precautions against dust, pests and sunshine", inspected quarterly.[38] Curators were to ensure the valuable specimens were locked and secured. Markham and Hargreaves' report defined what constituted "proper" museum practice, a definition which reappears in successive waves of consultants: establishing museums as educational institutions, particularly through the strategic use of labels; discerning objects worthy of display from forgeries or redundancies; and securing objects from deterioration or theft.

After Hargreaves' report, several other officials and consultants submitted reports echoing his proposed changes. The first was diplomat Harold Ingrams, who in 1936 requested case fittings and catalogues from London-based museum supply companies and "an intelligent curator-assistant, who is prepared to be interested in the subject".[39] He also asked to throw

[30] Ibid., p. 92.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., p. 96.
[33] Ibid., p. 97.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Duncan and McClellan, *The Art of Curating: Paul J. Sachs and the Museum Course at Harvard* (2018); Rader and Cain, *Life on Display: Revolutionizing US Museums of Science and Natural History in the Twentieth Century* (2014).
[38] Markham and Hargreaves, *The Museums of India* (1936), p. 97.
[39] Ingrams (Political Officer, Aden), minute, 9 Nov. 1936, File 98/1, IOR/R20/B/899, BL, London. Emphasis in original.

out "miscellaneous rubbish" in the displays and noted that objects "unlabeled are worse than useless".[40] Here again the supremacy of didactic labels emerges, underscoring ideas of what is needed for museums to be efficient educators. After Ingrams was reassigned, Bernard Reilly, the first governor of Aden Colony, created the Settlement Museum Committee, composed of himself and three other British officials in June 1937.[41] Reilly told London that local staff could remove trash and provide a general outline of the history and topography of Aden, including a map and photos. A "competent scholar" and "expert from abroad" who was "ground[ed] … in the elements of museum administration" was required, however, for conducting a "proper" survey and classification of the inscriptions in the museum.[42] In a document addressed to the chairman of Aden, the Civil Secretary reiterated Reilly's request "to secure the temporary services of a competent scholar to classify and reorganize the antiquities department of the museum and to train a Curator".[43] Aden officials consulted with the British Museum, who offered more advice via letter, without having visited the museum. The committee resolved to get an acquisitions book to maintain a record of the collections.[44]

Later, another foreign expert — Sir Laurence P. Kirwan — arrived in March 1939. Kirwan's subsequent report to the Colonial Office noted that "the present museum leaves much to be desired as regards size, arrangement, labelling, exclusion of forgeries, etc".[45] He recommended the removal of several duplicate objects. Kirwan also singled out an object "showing strong Hellenistic influence [that] should be given greater prominence", indicating a clear preference for antiquities from Eurocentric historical periods, and encouraged colonial officials to monitor the "interesting" collection of Aden businessman Kaiky Muncherjee.[46] Kirwan also persuaded Muncherjee to "in future keep a record of the reputed provenance of antiquities bought by him".[47] During Kirwan's brief sojourn to Aden, he established the Hellenistic objects as important and thus affirmed the primacy of Eurocentric histories over others, and encouraged creating provenance and documentary paperwork for objects to later credential them for museum display and publication. These consultants were part of a broader colonial disciplining of daily life through the economy, transportation and architecture, which was oriented towards achieving so-called modernity.[48]

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Civil Secretary (Aden Settlement) memo to Chairman (Aden Settlement), 10 January 1937, File 98/1, IOR/R20/B/899, BL, London. Ingrams became the Resident Advisor and later Governor at Mukalla, up the coast from Aden, where he sustained an interest in South Arabian antiquities. Ingrams' daughter Leila would later donate her parents' extensive collection of South Arabian antiquities, 855 objects in total, to the British Museum, according to Leila Ingrams' donor page on the British Museum website.

[42] Reilly (Governor, Aden Settlement) to Blaxter (Colonial Office), 8 Jun. 1937, File 98/1, IOR/R20/B/899, BL, London.

[43] Civil Secretary (Aden Settlement) memo to Chairman (Aden Settlement), 10 Jun. 1937, File 98/1, IOR/R20/B/899, BL, London.

[44] Aden Settlement Museum Committee proceedings, 18 Oct. 1937, File 98/1, IOR/R20/B/899, BL, London.

[45] Kirwan, "Archaeology in Aden Colony and Protectorate", 4 Mar. 1939, CO 725/63/17, TNA, London.

[46] Several of Muncherjee's objects later entered the British Museum's collection regardless of their lack of provenience. Muncherjee offered his objects to Reilly for sale for 20,000–30,000 rupees in February 1939 (File 98/1, IOR/R20/B/899, BL, London). Muncherjee's collection was purchased after his death in the 1960s when Brian Doe created a museum bespoke for the acquisition.

[47] Kirwan, "Archaeology in Aden Colony and Protectorate", 4 Mar. 1939, CO 725/63/17, TNA, London.

[48] Barak, *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt* (2013); Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*; Reisz, *Showpiece City: How Architecture Made Dubai* (2021); Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (1991).

Many of these reports echo each other closely, despite their different authors. The Aden Museum improvements constantly fluctuated as people came and went, perhaps because they were not paid for this work and the museum was a passion project managed in spare moments of an otherwise fulltime government posts. There is no discernible attempt to incorporate Adeni locals. The only person who was perhaps a local or an Arab was A.K. Zoobaidi, whose minimal presence in the documents constitutes his name, attendance status, and the fact that he became the Settlement Museum Committee minute-taker.

What is striking about these records is the precision with which certain elements of museum practice are described (e.g., trained curator, airtight cases, explanatory labels) and the utter lack of clarity about others: there is no indication of what organization or spatial provisions should look like, how or by whom objects of importance would be identified, nor what a 'nice' display consists of. Hargreaves complained of unattractive exhibits, but did not specify what made them so. This lack of specificity creates space where only "properly" trained experts, with a particular aesthetic judgment, can validate a display. Similarly, identifying and removing fakes also requires training, demonstrating expertise by allowing one to parse the authentic from the fake, and secondly, conferring value both to the expertise *and* on the object. Not quantifying what constitutes nice or attractive, legitimate or fake, allows for future interventions. The subjective nature of this expertise also creates space to deny the qualifications or aesthetics of others.

Throughout these records, there are repeated invocations to publish inscriptions. Part of this urgency was for scientific knowledge: at the time scholars were actively deciphering ancient Arabian languages like Sabaean and Himyaritic. However, publishing artifacts also helped to legitimize their value and to justify museums' possession and safeguarding of such objects. The act of publication asserted the museum's ownership of these objects, affirmed their importance and status as legitimate artifacts, and created value for the museums that held them.

By October 1944, attempts to professionalize Aden's museum had dissolved. British officials noted with resignation that the state of the Aden Museum was "unsatisfactory but the difficulty is simply that officers are not obtainable for the kind of job like Director of Antiquities in time of war."[49] The exigencies of World War II thwarted museum projects in Aden.

The Aden Museum was, in many respects, not unique: after all, Markham and Hargreaves' 1936 report had targeted many imperial museums. Overall, the question of professionalization of US and British museums — specifically specialized training and education, professional conferences, and academic journals — had certainly been in the air in the 20 years prior to Markham and Hargreaves' statement.[50] Standardizing museum practice was a pervasive issue of the time, and resumed after World War II. Then consultants began coming to the Arabian Peninsula's museums again — this time, from the newly created UNESCO.

3 Peninsula museums during early nationalization

Another wave of cultural consultants' interventions emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as newly independent nations created museums across the Peninsula to help build a national historical narrative and buttress the legitimacy of these fledgling states.[51] During this period, many peninsula

[49] Clauson (Colonial Office) draft to Gadd (British Museum), 19 Oct. 1944, CO 725/86/15, TNA, London.

[50] Duncan and McClellan, *The Art of Curating*, p. 68.

[51] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*; Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*; Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*; Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (2003).

governments requested and received museum consultants from UNESCO, rather than the colonial officials of the past.

One of the first states on the Peninsula to request a UNESCO advisor was Kuwait, which had achieved independence in 1961. From the 1950s until 1990, Kuwait's arts scene was arguably the most vibrant on the Peninsula.[52] The Kuwaiti government also supported a thriving scholarship program.[53] A temporary museum for Kuwait had opened in 1957 in a historic palace; a British official recorded that

> the aim of the museum is to preserve a record of local crafts and customs in Kuwait and to show a comparison between conditions in Kuwait before and after the many development schemes which have been started since oil was discovered.[54]

There were also "plans to build a permanent museum in due course".[55]

UNESCO dispatched Dr. Salim Abdul Haq, the director of Syrian museums, to Kuwait in 1959.[56] Abdul Haq submitted a report based on this visit with a vision for the Kuwait Museum, and in 1964, Michel Écochard won an architectural competition to design a new museum according to Abdul Haq's specifications.[57] Écochard, along with other such architects, imported their ideas of what a museum was and its social role into the designs they produced for Arabian Peninsula museums.

In his proposal for the new Kuwait museum, Écochard wrote that the "primary purpose" of the museum

> is to offer the people an easy means of education through visual media, bringing them into contact not merely with works of art but also with all aspects of life throughout the Arabian Peninsula – the development of its natural resources, its history and art and lastly, all branches of present-day science, thus turning their gaze towards the future.[58]

This formulation of a museum's purpose fuses together several ideas common in European museology, and ones that become central over the following 60 years for museums in the Gulf states in particular: museums are core educational tools, they showcase a community's history and art, and they are future-oriented. That is, they are aimed at shaping future generations by inculcating civilizational ideals.

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[52] Al Qassemi, "Kuwait's Art Museum Succeeds Where Others Have Failed", *HuffPost*, 2 April 2013; Al Qassemi, "Toward Abstraction: The Case of Kuwait in the 1960s", in Gumpert and Takesh (eds), *Taking Shape: Abstraction from the Arab World, 1950s–1980s* (2020), p. 107.

[53] Al-Rashoud, "From Muscat to the Maghreb: Pan-Arab Networks, Anti-Colonial Groups, and Kuwait's Arab Scholarships (1953–1961)", *Arabian Humanities* 12 (2019).

[54] British Govt, "Kuwait Diary: 24 Dec 1957–27 Jan 1958", in Jarman (ed.), *Political Diaries of the Arab World: Persian Gulf*, vol 20: *1955–1958* (1990), p. 569.

[55] Ibid.

[56] British Govt, "Kuwait Diary: 24 November – 28 December 1959", in Jarman (ed.), *Political Diaries of the Gulf*, vol 22: *1959–1960* (1990), p. 158. During protectorate and trucial administrations, the British controlled entry and exit to the region for all non-locals, including temporary workers in the pearl industry, foreign businessmen and archaeologists, and British themselves, hence they were able to facilitate the entry of British consultants and private firms. For more, see: Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj*; and Alshehabi, "Policing Labour in Empire: The Modern Origins of the Kafala Sponsorship System in the Gulf Arab States", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 48.2 (2019), pp. 1–20.

[57] Écochard, "Plans for a National Museum in Kuwait", *Museum* XVII.3 (1964), pp. 146–147.

[58] Ibid., p. 147.

National museums, spearheaded by external consultants, continued to crop up in the late 1960s through the 1970s. In 1977, Rice's company completed the original Qatar National Museum. While Rice credits the Qatari emir with the decision to create a museum, Rice acknowledges that "the original concepts and planning, all the design phases of the principal buildings and their interiors and the direction of the research programmes were placed into the hands of Michael Rice & Company".[59] Rice cited a lack of scholarly publications on Qatar, and commented that in order to provide didactic material about Qatar for the museum, "one of the planners' first and most urgent priorities was to establish what were, in effect, crash programmes of research to provide the academic and scholarly foundation which each section of the museum would require".[60] Much as in Aden decades before, administrators pushed to generate scholarship that could legitimize these institutions and their collections. He concluded: "It is safe to say that the very calling into existence of the Qatar National Museum has resulted in the horizons of knowledge about Qatar and its immediate surroundings being significantly extended".[61] Here again the museum as a tool of nationalist education appears.

While visiting experts were now affiliated with UNESCO rather than the British Crown, many of their recommendations remained similar, including prescriptions for training. In his report to UNESCO on plans for a museum in Bahrain, Écochard — as Markham, Hargreaves and Reilly before him — commented on the need for training abroad to bring up specialized museum staff. He remarked: "Grants should be created for the training abroad of three or four museum curators".[62] While he did not specify, "abroad" likely meant in Europe, the UK or US.

In the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, established in 1967, a team of UNESCO experts headed by architect and conservator Ronald Lewcock arrived in 1979 to evaluate and document the preservation of archaeological monuments and sites, including Aden's museums.[63] Lewcock's report emphasized the foreign training of staff, noting that Yemen's Department of Antiquities and Museums was headed by a "Baghdad-trained archaeologist".[64] Despite this, the consultants noted "there is a lack of adequate means to fulfil the many responsibilities entrusted to the Department".[65] The pace of training was not fast enough to fill the needs of these institutions (or at least, such a dearth was claimed), presaging further reliance on temporary, foreign experts.

UNESCO consultants also focused on cleanliness and security as well as emphasizing labelling. Lewcock's report notes that the Al-Tawāhī museum, opened by the British in 1967, presented two key problems: "the problem of metal corrosion due to the location of the museum on the sea shore; [and] the problem of security; the windows are still unprotected and there are no fire extinguishers".[66] Lewcock's team reported on several other Yemeni museums. Of another museum, the team wrote: "apart from seeing the objects on display, visitors are not assisted in any way. There are no available guidebooks, historical notices or maps. All the items are wrapped in a thick layer of dust, ill-lit" and critically, "bear no label".[67] The experts

[59] Rice, "National Museum of Qatar, Doha", *Museum International* 29.2–3 (1977), p. 79.
[60] Ibid., p. 83.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Écochard, "Programme, Selection of Site and First Sketch for a Museum - Bahrain", *UNESCO* (1972), p. 15.
[63] Meskell has written about UNESCO 's turn to consultative work, away from field archaeology: Meskell, *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace* (2018).
[64] Lewcock, Roger, and Gire, "*Conservation, Restoration and Documentation of Historical and Archaeological Monuments and Sites: People's Democratic Republic of Yemen* (1980), p. 1.
[65] Ibid., p. 2.
[66] Ibid., p. 47.
[67] Ibid.

further noted the absence of labelling at the Al-Mukallā museum.[68] At the Say'ūn Museum, they recommended "greater emphasis might be placed on improved techniques of display … [text] should be reduced to a minimum and then be in several languages so that it can reach the widest number of visitors".[69] Like prior consultants, Rice, Écochard, and the Lewcock team focused on the importance of labels as educational and legitimizing tools, particularly emphasizing clarity and multilingual accessibility.

Meanwhile political changes were afoot, ones that sent GCC and Yemeni museums on different paths. The GCC was founded in 1980, uniting the Peninsula's oil-rich states and excluding Yemen. In August 1990, Saddam Hussein's forces violently invaded neighboring Kuwait. Yemen opposed intervention from non-Arab states, causing a strong rift with Saudi Arabia. Yemen also experienced political instability in the early 1990s, and again beginning in 2004. After the 1970s, it no longer makes sense to speak of a relatively unified museum practice across the Peninsula. Without oil resources and given differing political structures, Yemen's museums have diverged from the corporate route pursued by the GCC states. Yet contemporary Gulf museum consultants make interventions similar to those their predecessors made in the prior two waves of museum interventions.

4 21st century corporate consulting

A new period of sustained museum development launched in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In this phase, the GCC states were most active, particularly Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. In contradistinction to the UNESCO and British colonial waves of the past, this moment is marked by neoliberal constructs of professionalism and corporate franchising. However, an emphasis on the training and influence of short-term foreign experts, the role of the museum as educational beacon, and the necessity of labeling as a key didactic tool reappear.

In 2006, the Emirati government announced plans to build a Guggenheim and a Louvre in Abu Dhabi. Star architects Frank Gehry and Jean Nouvel designed the Guggenheim and Louvre, respectively. The museums' announcement had signaled tacit government support for the arts, and organizations sprung up across the UAE to provide ancillary services: the publication ArtMap noted 45 arts organizations in Dubai in 2009, which had leapt to 96 organizations by 2017. English-speaking foreigners came to fill newly created jobs in the arts sectors, recruited by professional cultural agencies like Barker Langham and Lord Cultural Consulting, forming a class of expatriate arts workers in the Gulf. This influx of workers echoed earlier flows of museum professionals and architects who came to the region in the mid-20th century to evaluate and produce museums in Yemen, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

Government agreements to build the Louvre, Guggenheim, and Zayed National Museum in Abu Dhabi contained clauses that mandated French, American, and British staff train Emirati nationals. The 2007 Guggenheim Foundation press release, entitled "Mentorship and Training of the United Arab Emirates Nationals is Key Element of Joint Accord", shared that "principal elements of the agreement included" the following points:

- The establishment of an Abu Dhabi museum staff projected at 250 to 300 persons, including UAE nationals.
- The creation of mentorship and training programs of the UAE personnel as an integral feature of the museum and its mission.

[68] Ibid., p. 48.
[69] Ibid., p. 49.

- The development and implementation of an educational program for UAE schools and universities.[70]

The press release established a 20-year timeframe for the accord, and noted that Shaykh Sultan bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, the leading authority on the Abu Dhabi side, "highlighted education as a key element of the accord".[71] At the same time, plans for branches of the Sorbonne and New York University in Abu Dhabi as well as several branch campuses in Doha were afoot; many interlocutors assumed these new campuses would train staff for related career fields.

Further, the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi press release also spelled out the precise job titles targeted: "curators, curatorial assistants, registrars, art handlers and museum security personnel".[72] Similar language appeared in Louvre Abu Dhabi press releases: "French museum expertise will assist with the acquisition over the next decade … this support will also facilitate the development of educational programmes and specialized art conferences that will be held in Abu Dhabi aimed at inspiring and developing the next generation of cultural leaders".[73] Alongside these leaders, the Louvre release noted plans to train conservators: "restoration of art works will be carried out at the Abu Dhabi centre, which will also be used to train restoration professionals".[74] In 2018, a Louvre Abu Dhabi press release quoted the chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi saying the museum "illustrates our commitment to train and champion the next generation of Emirati museum professionals".[75] Even overtly commercial enterprises like auction houses participate in such education and training initiatives: Sotheby's held its first Dubai auction in 2017, after the organization "collaborated on a series of educational initiatives following the signing of a memorandum of understanding with [t]he Cultural Office".[76]

How did these agreements play out on the ground? In 2014, I attended a training on accessibility for Abu Dhabi cultural authority staff, including those who would later separate to become staff at the Zayed National Museum, the Louvre Abu Dhabi, and others. In an airy conference room in a nondescript building on Saadiyat Island, I sat with a group of British, Emirati, non-Emirati Arab, and US employees. They were primarily, but not exclusively, women, ranging in age from early 20s to mid-50s. Both trainers were white consultants, coming from a major US museum and the British Museum, respectively. The first consultant, who I call Mia, focused on accessibility. The morning began with an icebreaker: When are museums at their best?

Among the responses was a middle-aged British woman: "museums can make us feel like global citizens". Khadija, an Emirati employee, described them as "something the whole family can enjoy". Another local employee noted she wanted to work at the Zayed National Museum, "forming citizens and visitors". The staff stressed the museum as a site of nation-building, of education, and of the community; these frameworks of the museum echo the goals of colonial and early nationalist organizers.

The trainers thanked the staff for their contributions, affirming them. Mia then put up a slide with the day's course outcomes: (1) Examine the current and upcoming programs and

[70] Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, "Abu Dhabi and SRGF Announce New Guggenheim Abu Dhabi" (2007).
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Albawaba, "Louvre Abu Dhabi to Be Created within the Saadiyat Cultural District" (2007).
[74] Ibid.
[75] Louvre Abu Dhabi, "Louvre Unveils Exceptional New Acquisitions and Loans from October" (2018).
[76] Arabian Knight, "Sotheby's to Host Dubai Debut Sale Next Month", 2 October 2017.

evaluations, (2) Develop a plan for inclusive design in audience engagement. Mia expanded: This means, is everything audience-centered? What visitor amenities are there for wayfinding, or seating, for example? Mia's slides quoted a goal to "ensure museums are accessible to a broad audience and that they do not intentionally or even subtly or unintentionally exclude anyone." This goal derives from the American Alliance of Museums' 1992 report, *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums.* Another slide showed findings from a Wallace Foundation report, *Building Arts Organizations that Build Audiences* (2012). A third quote came from the book *Magnetic: The Art & Science of Engagement* (2013), published by the American Alliance of Museums. Mia highlighted the need to ensure relevance to audiences, and seeking understanding and insight. To do this, Mia used corporate lingo, encouraging staff to build and maintain relationships with "key stakeholders" and "monitor the external environment" to mitigate risk.[77]

All of Mia's sources, her examples, and her insights derived from a US context (not even North American), which was never caveated. The applicability of her insights — in a training on meeting the needs of diverse audiences — was assumed to be universal. The underlying assumption was that processes to make US museums more accessible would function similarly elsewhere. As corollary, the training was predicated on the presumption that museums everywhere would have the same problems or issues with accessibility, showing a stunning lack of contextual awareness (or at least, failure to prepare). While certainly museums globally face some uniform challenges, the issues of an established museum in a settler colonial context like the US would, at least in some respects, differ from the issues of a new museum in a majority-minority, non-colonial context like the UAE. Further, most issues with risk in US museums are due to lack of funding and/or state support — which is not the issue with Emirati state museums.

Mia then showed clips from Aimee Mullins' 2009 TED Talks video, "The opportunity of adversity", where Mullins speaks about her experiences as athlete with both legs amputated below the knee. Mia clicked on the English captions, which scrolled over the image of Mullins, a white woman wearing a deep v-neck, sleeveless shirt, delivering her talk. At one point, Mullins notes, "The only disability I have faced is the fact that those words were used to describe me", and she argues that our language and our presumptions about peoples' abilities limit us more than any conditions we may face. Mullins also noted that the English word "education" comes from the word educe — to bring out what is within. Mia did not engage with the video, nor did she ask participants if these valences translated into their languages — or how such insights applied in the UAE context. All of these references and etymologies were US-centric, with no attempt to customize for an Arabic-speaking staff or a non-US audience.

After citing the World Health Organization's 2011 definition of disability as a contextual variable, based on a person's intersection with their physical, commercial, information, policy, and social environments, Mia added, "In the US, we have the Americans with Disabilities Act", which requires particular protections and accommodations be implemented. There was no mention of UAE law, yet Emirati Law No. 29 of 2006 ensured equal rights and access for people with disabilities. The UAE also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010. Whether she was aware of them or not, Mia did not raise these laws nor their provisions to help the UAE-based staff ensure their museums and programming were aligned with local laws and policies. After a session that offered US-centric structures

[77] McElhinny, "The Audacity of Affect: Gender, Race and History in Linguistic Accounts of Legitimacy and Belonging", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010), pp. 309–328.

of accessibility in the museum as purportedly universal models, Mia rather ironically concluded her session with some tips, including: "Expect diversity".

In prior waves, the consultants often deposited reports with local state agents, whereas in the 21st century, there were local museum staff who consultants came to train. These more recent trainings also expanded the range of content consultants had offered, from the more technical (i.e., removing duplicates) and encouraging didactic labels to adding accessibility considerations. In addition to one-off consultants like Mia brought in for individual sessions, consultants training new museum workers also included those employed by the cultural authority, often on residential contracts of one to five years. In 2013, I interviewed a senior member of the team working on the Zayed National Museum, who I call Sam.[78] Sam told me:

> Ultimately we're training up our successors … there are three big museums within 4 years that need a couple hundred people each in all manner of positions. So it's not a case of training one or two, we've gotta train 50 people each.[79]

Another staff member, who I call Layla, worked for Abu Dhabi's cultural ministry; Layla wondered aloud to me who would compose the texts for four upcoming exhibitions in the next two years. Layla believed the current staff were not equipped for this work, either in experience or numbers. Given staff shortages, the agencies hired consultants and relied heavily on their partnerships with French and British museums. Elaborating on the British Museum's consultant relationship with the Zayed National Museum, Sam said:

> They worked on the intellectual framework for the museum … they review and comment on the building design in terms of being fit for our museum's purpose … The same is true with the exhibition design … and the business and operations side, and you know, drafting the org chart and all that stuff. They are really giving us the benefit of their expertise but it is a consultant's relationship. A contract.[80]

As in prior moments, cultivating staff with particular pedigrees and professionalized training were key, as the new museums built out their organizational charts and staff rosters based on roles defined or drafted from those at the British Museum.

To fill current gaps, cultural ministries resorted to long-established tactics: sending students abroad for training, and hiring short-term, foreign consultants in the interim. Layla shared that the ministry had reserved positions for young Emirati citizens who had gone abroad for training, in one instance waiting two years for someone to return to fill a post. In 2013, the Salama Foundation announced its Salama bint Hamdan Emerging Artists Fellowship (SEAF) program. After successfully completing a 10-month intensive program based in Abu Dhabi, graduates may apply for full scholarship to cover a master's degree abroad. SEAF graduates have subsequently studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Central St. Martin's, and Goldsmith's, among others, and several now hold important positions in the UAE's cultural powerhouses, including the Jameel Arts Centre, Sharjah Art Foundation, and New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD). This time, it seems the "train abroad, return home to cultural leadership" method has had some success.

[78] The use of pseudonyms is a disciplinary norm in anthropology, as it allows researchers to protect interlocutors from potential retribution and, in this case, ensure that staff members are not perceived to be official spokespeople for the organization.

[79] Interview with "Sam" (senior Zayed National Museum staff member), UAE, July 2013.

[80] Ibid.

Universities like NYUAD, the Sorbonne Abu Dhabi, and Zayed University among others have also worked, with limited success, to establish relationships with Abu Dhabi's major museums to create training opportunities for their students. I attended a meeting between NYUAD and Louvre Abu Dhabi teams in 2015. The meeting appeared to derail as it became clear that both organizations were still so much in flux: a Louvre representative asked what the future research directions of NYUAD would be. A senior faculty member responded that they had hopes for a program in Arabic literature and one in museum studies, but that "things were growing so much that it's unclear what the directions will be". He countered by asking: "What are your areas? It would be helpful to know." The Louvre representative said vaguely, "We plan to have 12 main galleries. Our goal is to evoke, to open a window." She did not offer more clarity than that. Because both entities were in development, answering to different leaders, it was hard to predict areas of alignment, although clearly creating local education and training for the museums' future needs was a logical plan. The processes of cultivating and generating museum expertise take years.

5 Conclusion

On a pleasant December day in 2023, I stepped onto an air-conditioned bus in AlUla (in lieu of aka), Saudi Arabia. I was headed to Madāʾin Ṣāliḥ (aka Hegra), a valley of stunning Nabatean-era tombs carved into the sandstone cliffs. As my friend and I waited for the bus to depart, the young Saudi woman from check-in approached us. She said her sisters were studying in the UK, but she was content to remain in AlUla. "There are more jobs here now", she said. Indeed, the Royal Commission for AlUla aims to create 38,000 new jobs in the culture and heritage sector by the year 2035.[81] Over dinner that evening, a colleague told me about the Commission's scholarship program, which provided funding for 1,000 young Saudis to be educated abroad to come back and work in the heritage sector. I looked it up later: a press release for the program noted that it "will enable the youth of AlUla to get academic and professional training and enhance their skills as the future leaders of AlUla".[82] The Saudi government also signed a US $20 billion deal with the French government to develop AlUla, including the creation of a new transnational agency, Afalula, to facilitate the project.[83] Reliance on Euro-American consultants has clearly established patterns that persist today, whether intentionally or not, and developments in AlUla continue in the vein of early 21st century consultants.

Such reliance on consultants has likely foreclosed more homegrown initiatives or modes of display. More scholarly attention to autochthonous display methods, such as *majlis* rooms, is needed and could contribute to decolonizing museum display and diversifying museum practice globally.[84] Attempts to recover the contributions of Gulf residents and their experiences, such as Sachedina's work on museums in Oman, are critical as time passes and witnesses to mid-century developments pass away.[85]

[81] Royal Commission for AlUla, "Investing in AlULa: The Next Chapter in AlUla's Legacy" (2023).
[82] Royal Commission for AlUla, "The Royal Commission for AlUla Launches the Second Phase of Its Scholarship Program" (2023).
[83] Bukhamseen, "Historic Saudi Region to Be Developed with French Partnership", *Al Arabiya English*, 9 April 2018; Noce, "France to Help Build a 'New Petra' in Saudi Arabia with Estimated $20bn Development Deal", *The Art Newspaper*, 9 April 2018.
[84] See: Exell, *Modernity and the Museum* (2016); MacLean, "Time, Space and Narrative in Emirati Museums" (2016); Wilson, *Afterlives of Revolution: Everyday Counterhistories in Southern Oman* (2023).
[85] Sachedina, *Cultivating the Past, Living the Modern: The Politics of Time in the Sultanate of Oman* (2021).

The museum sector is not the only industry that evinces this scheme of external consultants — in the GCC, policy, city planning, and transportation sectors have historically also relied on Western expats.[86] In addition to the erasure of other modes of being, this reliance also reinforces what Le Renard has identified as discursive claims of superiority, which "produc[e] and justif[y] hierarchy-generating differences".[87] That is, this reliance generates inequality. And it does so under the guise of professionalism and business efficiency. While the Gulf, in particular, is often exceptionalized,[88] consistent foregrounding of outside consultants is a mode of postcolonialism that lingers on and is frequently overlooked.[89] Just because many parts of the Peninsula were not directly colonized does not mean there was no colonial influence in the region, or that there are no postcolonial sequelae.

Claims about the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf as devoid of culture and history, and as lacking museums, persist, despite a century of evidence to the contrary. Because this evidence is not housed in a convenient or single archive, and there has been frequent turnover of short-term personnel, this history can often be overlooked. But overlooking this history also erases continuities across the Peninsula, ignores prior attempts to shape museums and museum expertise throughout the region, and sidelines the continued impacts and colonial legacies on contemporary cultural organizations and projects in the Gulf.

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[87] Le Renard, *Western Privilege*, p. 214.

[88] See: Kanna, *Dubai: City as Corporation* (2011), p. 1; Kanna, Le Renard, and Vora, *Beyond Exception*.

[89] Kanna, Le Renard, and Vora, *Beyond Exception.*

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